

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ISLAMA 05368 251258Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AID-05 /061 W
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R 250925Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1846
INFO AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 5368

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PK, US, PFOR
SUBJECT: MFA COMPLAINT ABOUT AMERICAN JOURNALIST

1. DURING MEETING BETWEEN CHARGE AND DIRECTOR GENERAL (AMERICAS) KHURSHID HYDER ON MAY 24, DR. HYDER TOLD CHARGE SHE WAS UNDER INSTRUCTIONS TO RAISE ONE MATTER CONCERNING AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST. SHE NOTED THAT TWO WEEKS AGO, AP CORRESPONDENT BARRY SCHLACHTER HAD FILED A STORY FROM LAHORE THAT CORPS COMMANDER GENERAL MOHAMMAD IQBAL HAD RESIGNED. SHE SAID THIS STORY WAS COMPLETELY FALSE AND ADDED THAT "IF TOTALLY BASELESS, GENDENTIOUS REPORTS ARE FILED, WE WILL BE OBLIGED TO TAKE THE NECESSARY ACTION UNDER MARTIAL LAW."

2. SHE ADDED THAT THERE WERE PRESSURES TO ARREST SCHLACHTER, BUT THE PM HAD INTERVENED AND SAID SCHLACHTER SHOULD NOT BE PICKED UP. BHUTTO WAS GREATLY DISTURBED BY THE REPORT, HOWEVER, AND WANTED THE EMBASSY TO KNOW ABOUT THE INCIDENT. CHARGE RESPONDED THAT HE ASSUMED DR. HYDER WOULD NOT WANT HER FORCEFUL STATEMENT REPEATED WORD FOR WORD TO AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS. SHE REPLIED WITH A HALF SMILE NOTING SHE WOULD PREFER IF IT WERE NOT SINCE IT "MAY BE DISTORTED
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JUST AS YOUR DEMARCHE ON BURKI'S COLUMNS WAS LATER DISTORTED BY MR. BURKI."

3. AS BACKGROUND, ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO SCHLACHTER HAD PICKED UP A RUMOR THAT IQBAL HAD RESIGNED AND FILED IT TO THE AP. (WE RECEIVED SIMILAR RUMORS REPORTED BY DAO-THAT IQBAL HAD TENDERED H
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RESIGNATION BUT THAT BHUTTO REFUSED TO ACCEPT IT-BUT WERE UNABLE TO CONFIRM THEM) ALL INDIA RADIO CARRIED THE STORY THE FOLLOWING DAY, AND, FOR OBVIOUS REASONS, STORY TOUCHED A SENSITIVE NERVE IN GOP. ACCORDING TO STORY SCHLACTER TOLD EMBOFF IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE INCIDENT, DAY FOLLOWING AIR REPORT, SCHLACHER WAS CALLED TO CORPS HEADQUARTERS IN LAHORE " TO MEET GENERAL IQBAL." AFTER WAITING TWO HOURS, IQBAL APPEARED, TOLD SCHLACHER "YOU HAVE FILED A MISCHIEVOUS STORY" AND IMMEDIATELY LEFT. SCHLACHER WAS ASKED TO LEAVE HEADQUARTERS BUT REFUSED SAYING HE HAD BEEN PROMISED AN INTERVIEW WITH IQBAL AND WOULD NOT LEAVE UNTIL IT WAS GIVEN. FINALLY, AFTER BEING THREATENED WITH EVICTION FROM THE BASE, OR POSSIBLE DETENTION, HE DEPARTED. HE LATER FILED A RETRACTION OF THE REPORT.

4. SCHLACHER HAS NOW RETURNED TO TOKYO, HIS HOME BASE. WE PLAN TO ADVISE ANY AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS WHO COME THROUGH, WHO WE THINK MAY BE OVERLY IMPETUOUS, THAT WHILE IN MARTIAL LAW AREAS THEY SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THEY FALL UNDER MARTIAL LAW JURISDICTION. WE WILL DO THIS IN A LOW-KEY WAY AND WILL NOT MENTION THE SCHLACHER CASE.

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